

Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

8/9/32

4378 U

OFFICE COPY

BREEZE HILL NEWS

VOLUME II

OCTOBER, 1932

No. 2



Teucrium chamædrys is a fine evergreen edging plant

PUBLISHED WITH REASONABLE REGULARITY BY THE McFARLAND ORGANIZATIONS
MOUNT PLEASANT PRESS, HARRISBURG, PENNA.

THE J. HORACE MCFARLAND COMPANY and the MCFARLAND PUBLICITY SERVICE publish BREEZE HILL NEWS to be sent without charge to those who may find it useful and to those who ask for it. The purpose is to acquaint readers with the unique facilities for satisfactory selling of noteworthy plants, trees, seeds, bulbs, and the horticultural service provided by the growing and testing done at Breeze Hill Gardens and the intelligent writing, illustrating, and printing done at the Mount Pleasant Press. Questions asked about plants, pictures, promotion, and printing are cheerfully answered, without obligation to either party. The Mount Pleasant Press in Harrisburg houses both organizations, and visitors to it and to the Breeze Hill Gardens are always welcome. The location of the Press is at Crescent and Mulberry streets (ten minutes from the Pennsylvania Railroad Station), and the mail address is Box 687, Harrisburg, Pa.

THE "WHY" OF BREEZE HILL GARDENS

By J. HORACE MCFARLAND

THE 1932 bloom season, so far, has been pleasing not only to me but also to thousands of visitors who have actually worn out the grass-paths we thought would carry any reasonable traffic. Incidentally, it needs to be said that these visitors, who have registered in the "Rose House" from all America, have given again full assurance that the sight of beautiful bloom promotes order and respect. There has been no vandalism.

But especially interesting to me have been the horticultural specialists, tradesmen, and others who have found Breeze Hill Gardens worth visiting. Seedsmen, nurserymen, rose-growers, garden writers, college and professional men, and garden club officials have been among those who enjoy more because they expect more.

The garden club delegations include those who know, those who want to know, and those who ought to know. They find advantage at Breeze Hill because they see there plant-beauty, plant-experiments, great variety, and an entire absence of the architectural features which make some gardens depressing to ordinary non-millionaire folk. The many somewhat independent gardens are small enough for back-yard imitation, and yet combine to an impressive showing.

The educational visitors—landscape architects, college professors—have had especial advantage. One true college plantsman almost got to his knees before the fine young Dove Tree, *Davidia involucrata*, which was one of the last gifts to Breeze Hill of the late lamented Dr. E. H. Wilson. He studied the vigorous specimens of *Gordonia alatomaha*, a rare American late-summer-flowering small tree, and he had a real “kick” from the dainty bloom of *Magnolia parviflora*, showing its white cup with what seemed to be a ripe strawberry upside-down as its stamen cluster. He took away leaves to show his classes, and observed that there were prospering specimens of the Southern Evergreen Privet, *Ligustrum lucidum*, and of *Magnolia grandiflora*, both presumably not hardy here.

A nurseryman from the Chicago suburbs filled his notebook with rose-observations, as he studied until dark overtook him the carefully labeled roses in bloom, including 175 different climbers as well as 800 varieties of bush roses. No such opportunity for fair comparison, he insisted, was available anywhere else in America. It was much more valuable here, he thought, because we have nothing to sell, no “pets” to push, while we do have all the important novelties, and many, such as our Australian importations, not yet to be seen elsewhere.

A great Chicago seedsman (not a customer of the McFarland Company, by the way) found much of value as he made color photographs and studied certain new commercial offerings from California and from Boston.

So Breeze Hill Gardens seem to be coming into a much larger usefulness than was in my mind when, twenty-two years ago, I planned “to create pictures to and from the house.” Pictures there are, and they have now reached a high mark of usefulness because of the thousands of good photographs and the hundreds of accurate color records added to the careful observation which give the Mount Pleasant Press the high efficiency it possesses in economically promoting the sale of the materials that make better gardens.

The rock-gardens have provided great enjoyment and

some lessons. They are new, for the first and smallest of them was begun in 1927, and the larger and more useful sections are barely two years from ground-breaking. Constantly congratulated on their apparent maturity, and on the "advantage" of having a natural formation to be uncovered and planted, I find some satisfaction in saying that Breeze Hill had no "rock" as large as a hen's-egg five years ago. Here are no rock-piles planted; here are examples of how nature can be transplanted, simulated, developed.

So the "why" of Breeze Hill Gardens in 1932 is quite different from their reason in 1909, and I am not ashamed of the situation. Larger values are in the making!



The exaggerated spurs of *Aquilegia longissima* are 5 inches or more long

FROM THE BREEZE HILL NOTE BOOKS

III

Aquilegia longissima

The Breeze Hill Columbines have achieved not a little fame, for a strain has been evolved there which seems to be a little better than most things in commerce, at least on this side of the water. In fact, for the past two years one of the largest wholesale growers in this country has been growing his plants from Breeze Hill seed.

Because we are very much interested in trying all kinds of Columbines, the picture of *Aquilegia longissima* in Bailey's Cyclopedia of Horticulture has teased us for many years. Bailey's picture was reproduced from the first volume of *Garden and Forest* published in 1888, and the accompanying description states that the plant is a native of the warm Southwest and not likely to be hardy. In referring to the two articles in the first volume of *Garden and Forest*, we find that on one occasion this species was brought into cultivation in New England, and produced flowers with extraordinary spurs $4\frac{1}{2}$ to 6 inches long. We have not been able to find another record of this plant in cultivation, and as the article in question stated that the plants were lost because this species was not hardy or long-lived, and did not set seed in cultivation, we decided to give it up until we could manage a personal expedition into the wilds of Arizona to find it.

But fate was kind to us. In one of the numbers of the clever little magazine called *The Santa Barbara Gardener* we noticed that certain hybrids of *Aquilegia longissima* were to be seen in that city. An inquiry to the editor disclosed where seed of these hybrids could be bought, and a half-dollar brought us a generous packet. Those seeds were prayerfully sowed last autumn. They germinated beautifully. Half of the seedlings were potted and plunged into

the coldframe; the other half went directly in the soil of the frame itself.

As far as we could tell, there was little or no indication of hybridity in the seedlings. They all looked alike and seemed to grow equally well. The foliage was gray and glaucous but not strikingly different from many individuals in the Breeze Hill strain. We had to remove the glass from the frame very early because the plants began to grow in February and showed indications of wanting to bloom. As soon as possible we transplanted the greater part of them to various borders and had the satisfaction of seeing them come into flower within a few weeks. Inasmuch as the article in *Garden and Forest* laid great emphasis upon the late-blooming habit of this species, we were much astonished to have them bloom in April, even considering the forcing effect of the frame.

All of the plants bloomed alike, showing no signs of mixture or hybrid parentage, and all looked like the true *A. longissima*, as it was depicted in the Cyclopaedia. The plants did not reach the 3-foot stature attributed to them by Bailey, and the spurs were not quite 6 inches long, although we did measure some that were 5 inches in length. The spurs were not pendulous as indicated in the *Garden and Forest* article, but no one who has ever grown Columbines on an extensive scale would consider that a constant or reliable character. The flowers were deep yellow with a greenish cast, the corolla somewhat darker and larger than the sepals. Many plants had spurs curled into spring-like coils and others held them out straight, but that, too, is not true for all flowers or for all the spurs on the same flower, and must be considered an incidental variation. The fact is that all the plants were so much alike, we feel that in some way we obtained seed of the pure species. Seed set sparingly, both when selfed and hybridized with other long-spurred varieties in bloom at the same time. Another year will be needed to tell whether the almost incredible exaggeration of the spurs can be transmitted to Breeze Hill Columbines.



The flowers of *Anemone apennina* look like immense hepaticas

Anemone apennina

A LECTURE-TOUR to the Cleveland neighborhood in the spring of 1928 introduced us to the beauty of *Anemone apennina*, which was on display in one of the many beautiful gardens along the lake-shore. Several weeks later a few growing tubers, with leaves still green, reached us, a gift for which we will be eternally grateful. In the Cleveland garden they were growing happily in an open, sunny border, so we planted two-thirds of them in a similar location at Breeze Hill. The remaining bulb or two went into Little California, on a rock-covered bank beneath an overhanging Linden.

Both clumps produced plants of lush, finely divided foliage starred all over next spring with pale lavender-blue flowers more than an inch across, reminding us of wide-open, starry-eyed Hepaticas gone crazy in the spring sunshine.

Since that memorable season the behavior of this *Anemone* has been a puzzle. The small clump in the shade spread so rapidly that many pieces were taken from it to establish it in other places. All efforts failed, and few or no flowers were produced on the original clump after that first year.

The bulbs in the sunny border scarcely multiply at all,

apparently concentrating their efforts on seeking shade, moving back farther and farther from the edge of the bed each season toward the shelter of some overhanging *Arbovitæ*s.

In 1931 we were tempted to believe that the plants should be divided and reset, but for some reason, luckily, it was not done, and this year we were rewarded by a broad mat of dazzling blue-eyed flowers in Little California, and a few very fine blooms on the clump in the sun.

We note that Farrer thought the best way to establish this plant was to take it in full growth. We are inclined to agree because, last autumn, we planted fully a quart of tubers received from a friend on the Pacific Coast. Not one of them showed up this spring, and none of the offsets which we have moved from the dormant clumps have ever reappeared. When once started in a shady place there does not seem to be any difficulty about making this beautiful *Anemone* grow, but age seems to be necessary to enable the clump to obtain normal blooming-size. Or was the extraordinary mildness of last winter the cause of its liberal blooming this year?

Talinum calycinum

Here is a strange little plant of the *Portulaca* tribe. Its needle-like, fleshy leaves are borne in tufts on crisp, ice-like stems, from which incredibly thin, wiry flower-stalks soar a foot or more high, dangling aloft a maze of reddish purple stars one-half inch across, with five petals and a mass of whitish stamens. The flowers open only in the afternoon for a short time and are closed in the evening and morning, but they succeed each other unceasingly for eight to ten weeks. The plant thrived with lush vigor in the hottest, driest, and most desert-like place we were able to prepare in the rock-garden.

Being a little bit nervous about its hardiness, a small rooted piece was broken off last autumn and tucked beneath the overhanging ledge of a rock. It was a fortunate thing, because during the winter wetness the main plant melted away and did not reappear this spring. The rescued piece

took its time about coming into growth, but eventually it came to, and began to bloom late this summer, while in several other places in the rock-garden little bits of plants sprang up either from the old root or seeds, so that we have no fear about keeping it another winter.

Rosa rouletti

Correvon tells us in "Rock Garden and Alpine Plants" that he found this rare little rose through his friend Colonel Roulett, in a high village of the Swiss Jura, but he gives no details as to its history or how it came there. Somewhere it has been reported that it was found growing in a pot on the window of a Swiss cottage. If so, it is evidently a lost form of the once popular *Rosa lawranceana*, which was introduced into Europe about the end of the eighteenth century. *R. lawranceana*, apparently, is one of the ancestors of the modern Polyantha Rose, but until last year practically all its varieties were extinct in this country.

Rosa rouletti is gradually coming into commerce, and a half-dozen plants obtained from Washington a year ago have provided us with a great deal of amusement—one can scarcely call them beautiful, or even pretty. The biggest of them is now scarcely 4 inches high, and the double, pink flowers less than a half inch in diameter. Last summer, the plant in full bloom could be nicely covered with a tea-cup. There is a record somewhere of a plant of *R. lawranceana* which in full bloom could be completely concealed beneath half an egg-shell. It was, evidently, a smaller variety than *R. rouletti*.

But the thing which prompts this paragraph is not the devastating importance of *Rosa rouletti* so much as the curious attitude which assumes that because of its size, and the fact that it was found in Switzerland, it should be called an alpine rose and recommended for the rock-garden. It does not belong in the rock-garden at all, for it is much too sophisticated to associate with the wildings we want there. In a faint way it recalls those detestable, starched, beruffled infants so nauseatingly exhibited by fatuous parents in

baby shows and minor theatricals. Besides, the name "alpine rose" confounds it with the true alpine rose, *R. pendulina*, which is a great climbing briar of the Alps.

But *Rosa rouletti* by itself is an impish little plant, and, if it ever becomes plentiful enough, might make an edging for rose-beds in place of Sweet Alyssum or some other less aristocratic subject. But it does not have the right "air" to be a satisfactory subject for the rock-garden any more than a bedding Geranium or a Canna.

Sedum hispanicum bithynicum

We are going to call it that anyway. Heaven alone knows what its true name is. The plants we have fit the description of *S. hispanicum* given by Farrer, in most respects, but they do not agree with the description he gives of *S. bithynicum*; and Bailey, both in his Cyclopedia and Hortus, ignores *bithynicum* entirely. It came to us under this name from a gardener in New England several years ago and has proved to be quite the prettiest of all the Sedums we have so far grown, although we have to confess with some chagrin that it *is* a biennial. The gray, mossy foliage strongly resembles *S. anglicum* throughout the autumn and winter months, but, late in the spring, small, reddish, much-branched flowering stems appear which burst into a glory of pale apple-blossom-pink flowers faintly splashed with crimson, which is quite the purest pink of any Sedums we have yet seen. Its color is fully the equal of that of any Sedum except, perhaps, *S. pulchellum*, which stupidly spoils the effect of its fine pink flowers by surrounding them with yellowish foliage.

The mass of pink beauty lasts for several weeks and then the plant gradually browns, dries up, and can be picked up and carried away, but it leaves behind a heritage of seedlings which transforms the ancestral domain into a mass of soft gray within several weeks, so that it really is perennial enough for any rock-gardener who does not insist upon having his space covered all the time.

A virtue of this biennial habit is that this Sedum, for

one, does not immediately seize possession of the entire garden. It is well for the rock-gardener to look with a great deal of suspicion on any new Sedum. Practically all of them are weeds of the first magnitude, greedy of space, and apt to over-reach and destroy everything in their neighborhood, except the rocks themselves.

Teucrium chamaedrys

The name *Teucrium* has always been a puzzle to us. It seems to be mixed up some way or other with the *Veronica* family, and until quite recently we passed up all *Teucriums* in catalogues as simply synonyms of some *Veronica*. But somebody had the kindness to send us a few plants of *Teucrium chamaedrys*, with the advice to use them in place of Boxwood. Encouraged by the performance of the original plants, we made a great many cuttings the first autumn and had a fine stock of small plants to set out in the spring of 1931. These little, thick-leaved, evergreen plants have grown to husky bushes a foot or more in diameter and nearly 18 inches high. After repeated shearing, they form a charming edging plant beside the stone walk which climbs along the top of the new rock-garden. The pretty spikes of rosy purple flowers are less important than the beauty of the foliage, and we cut them off ruthlessly whenever the plant needs shearing. Its common name is Germander, a word with a familiar ring, but the plant is seldom seen and certainly not sold with the freedom that it should be. Nothing short of expensive Box would make a finer edge for a perennial border, or, for that matter, any kind of formal design. It can be sheared to any extent, never looks bad, keeps its greenness all winter long, and grows in almost any location in which you choose to put it.

Nierembergia rivularis

Why is it that more people do not know this delightful weed? Even at Breeze Hill we had not come in contact with it until two years ago when a clump arrived with a consignment of other perennial plants from a nursery in Ohio. It was impossible to tell which was the top and which the

bottom of the clump, so we pulled it into two parts and planted a piece with one side down and another with the same side up. It made no difference to the plants. The piece that was planted up side down grew just as well as the part that was planted right side up, and almost immediately both sections of the original plant set out to conquer the universe, evidently considering Breeze Hill a mere obstacle to be overwhelmed in their progress.

Before the season was half over we were digging up baskets of White Cups, giving it to eager friends, dumping it in out-of-the-way corners, and otherwise trying to dispose of the surplus. It will grow in actual swamp, in hard, dry, sunny clay, on a mere skim of soil over a hot rock. In fact, we have yet to find any conditions which discourage it. A little slow in the spring, it breaks into bloom in early summer and stays in bloom until the last dog's hung. It is a cheerful little beggar and evidently enjoys being torn up and thrown away, because the plants left behind rapidly fill up the space left by their departed brethren. Its white, sunny faces looking up to the sky attract admiring attention from everybody, and aside from the care necessary to keep it from overrunning choicer plants, there isn't a finer rock-garden or edging plant that we know. To have a thing as beautiful as this so willing to grow and thrive happily is a great satisfaction in the world of fussy, miffy, sulky, and otherwise obstreperous rock-garden subjects.



Nierembergia rivularis snuggles into any space
however large or small